Callous defacing of a protected monument

446. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether callous defacing of a protected monument has been reported in the Hindustan Times dated 22nd June, 2001; and

(b) if so, the action taken by the Archaeological Survey of India to maintain it properly and save it from negligence?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) The Government are aware of the media report in this regard.

(b) The Raja Ugrasen-ki-Baoli, the protected monument mentioned in the media report is in a good state of preservation and specific conservation measures are taken for its repair and maintenance as required.

Improvement of Toursim in Pondicherry

447. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to improve tourism in Pondicherry; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the plans?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) Development and promotion of tourism and cultural activities is the responsibility of the State Governments/ UT Administrations. However, the Department of Tourism, Government of India provides Central financial assistance on the basis of projects prioritised annually in consultation with them. Funds are released on the basis of inter-se-priority and subject to availability.

During 2000-2001, three projects were sanctioned for Rs. 26.18 lakhs. For the year 2001-2002, 8 projects worth Rs. 279.00 lakhs have been prioritised.

(b) Promotion of tourism is a continuous process. The Government is promoting foreign as well as domestic tourism in the country including Pondicherry through its 18 overseas offices by advertising in print & electronic media, participation in travel fairs, inviting media, and Travel Agents on familiarization trips, extensive use of Information Technology in tourism promotion etc. Domestic tourism is encouraged through 21 domestic offices within India.

Maintenance and Management of Taj Mahal by a Private Company

†448. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the responsibility of maintenance and management of the historical Taj Mahal has been entrusted to a private company; if so, whether the Archaeological Survey of India was unable to maintain it;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of agreement entered into with the company and amount involved therein?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The Indian Hotels Company Ltd. have signed a MoU with the National Culture Fund and the Archaeological Survey of India to provide financial assistance towards conservation, environment development and improvement of tourist related amenities at the Taj Mahal, Agra. All conservation measures identified under the MoU will be carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India alone.

The creation of tourist related facilities and improvement of the environment will be promoted directly by the donor under strict terms and conditions laid down by the Archaeological Survey of India.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.